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MORMON AND JEWISH VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE[1]

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Summary.—In their responses to a questionnaire, undergraduates, 60 Mormons, viewed the afterlife as less pleasant than did the 37 Jews, while the Jews were more concerned with sin and judgment and more often believed in reincarnation.

Lester, Aldridge, Aspenberg, Boyle, Radsniak, and Waldon (2002) asked undergraduates about their beliefs concerning the nature of life after death. Roman Catholics had a more positive view than did Protestants, but the differences between these groups were small. The present note explored the views of 60 Mormons and 37 Jews who were administered a 43-item questionnaire (Lester, *et al.*, 2001-2002) during religious assemblies.

The samples of Mormons and Jews did not differ by sex (57% and 42%, respectively). The Mormons were younger (29.8 yr., $SD = 13.9$) than the Jewish sample (38.4 yr., $SD = 6.1$; $t = 3.54$, two-tailed $p = .001$).

The groups differed significantly on 28 of the 43 questions, more than would be expected by chance.[2] The Mormons more often answered "yes" to do you believe that the afterlife is in a specific place, is the afterlife determined by the timing of one's death, is the afterlife determined by your age at the time of death, is the afterlife determined by your psychiatric state at the time of death, is the transition between death and the afterlife instantaneous, do you believe that you will have human form in the afterlife, do you view the afterlife as distressing, in the afterlife do you expect to experience any pain, is the afterlife the final destination, and do you believe purgatory gives you a second chance to be eligible for an afterlife?

The Jews more often answered "yes" to is the afterlife determined by the cause of one's death (i.e., illness vs suicide), is the afterlife determined by rituals carried out by others at the time of your death, is the afterlife based on rituals carried out during the lifetime of the deceased, must forgiveness be requested by yourself prior to your death to get into heaven, is the afterlife determined by rituals carried out by others after your death, are there good and evil in the afterlife, are you in the same physical state in the afterlife as you were at the time of your death, are there material objects in the afterlife, do you experience a "day of judgment" upon entering the

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[2]Tables of data can be obtained from the Archives for Psychological Data, P.O. Box 7922, Missoula, MT 59807-7922. Remit $12.00 for photocopy of Document APD2004-028.

afterlife, are all your sins automatically forgiven at the time of your death, do you expect the afterlife to be eternal bliss, can the dead communicate with the living from the afterlife, do you believe in reincarnation, do you believe your reincarnated form can be other than human, in the afterlife do you expect to experience sexual desire, in the afterlife do you expect to experience hunger/thirst, does the way you lived your life determine your reincarnated form, and do you believe forgiveness is needed to ensure an afterlife?

These beliefs are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the religious authorities. In general, Mormons more often believed that one's state at the time of death affected the afterlife, and they saw the afterlife as less pleasant. These Jews were more concerned with rituals before and after the death, more often believed in reincarnation and were more concerned with sins and judgment.

REFERENCE

LESTER, D., ALDRIDGE, M., ASPENBERG, C., BOYLE, K., RADSNIAK, P., & WALDRON, C. (2001-2002) What is the afterlife like? *Omega*, 44, 113-126.

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